

## V

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

Among the many memories that I still have to share with those who have come with me so far, one in particular is the friendliness of the people who lived around us. We knew the names of almost every resident in Richmond and Langford Towns, and were on greeting terms with half of them. It was very different from life as I live it in Canberra today, seventy years on, where, except for our next-door neighbours, it took us months to get to know just the names of some of those who lived down our short street. Contact is limited mostly to a brief word or a wave as we pass, and an early attempt to get friendly with a couple living opposite taught us not to presume that such partners were necessarily man and wife! We had no such problems in Bangalore, where such couples always *were* man and wife, where our relations were open and neighbourly, and informal visits without notice were common among friends. Such intermingling was only to be expected in a small community where people were members of the same church, club or institute, or of groups like the Rate-Payers Association or the Richmond Town Provident Fund which, for a subscription of a rupee a month, assured one of a decent burial.

One reason for such personal intimacy was that people usually walked everywhere and were thus apt to meet on the street. It was a rare family that owned a car or a carriage, so passing each other on foot was a common occurrence and gave one a chance to stop and chat. Another was the fact that most families had at least one servant who did the cooking and generally looked after the house, leaving one free to drop in on a friend, often without notice, and pass a pleasant half hour. There was no TV to keep one glued to the sofa, no constant and tiring activity attending to tasks about the house that confront the liberated western home-maker of today, and still less of

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hustling children off to school or day-care centre before going out oneself to earn that second family income. One sufficed.

Evening visits were often family affairs. Visitors would be served biscuits and fizzy drinks like lemonade, ginger-beer or ice-cream soda. These would be decanted from a bottle stoppered by a glass marble held tight against a rubber ring by the pressure of the gas. Such bottles are a rarity now. I saw one exhibited in a castle in Scotland in 1973, a memento no doubt brought home by some retired imperial proconsul to remind him of his evening peg of whisky served by an Indian bearer dressed in white tunic and turban and wearing a regimental or service cummerbund. I brought one as a curio for each of my sons in Australia when I retired. None of us younger ones was allowed to sit with the visitors and listen to “old-fashioned conversation”, nor were we permitted to touch any of the biscuits laid out on the centre-table in the sitting-room if we happened to pass by. But we did finish what was left of the lemonade in its bottles on the back verandah while the elders continued to talk. Thus refreshed, I would be called out to recite “Young Lochinvar” or some other such piece of dramatic poetry learnt at school. After that we children would have to form a chorus around the piano and, with Margaret at the keys, regale our visitors with songs like “Ukelele Lady”, “In Sunny Havana”, or the more sedate “Indian Love Call” which lent itself to singing in parts, whereupon our visitors would proceed to take their leave. We had the sheet-music of all the popular tunes of the day, and I can remember the melodies of every one of them even now. Only their words have gone from my memory - and gone too is my voice.

For every birthday there had to be a party. Not all the fare was made at home; just the sandwiches for which cheese and mustard, or sardine, or spiced mutton ground to a paste were the favourite fillings, and a home-made semolina *halwa*. The birthday cake would be made and iced by our neighbourhood baker, who could also supply a variety of fancy cakes, curry-puffs, coconut ices and a kind of toffee which, not without good reason, we called stick-jaw. He would also bake our Christmas cake - eight large tins filled to the

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brim for our big family - and the turkey we usually had for Easter or some other special day. Aerated waters would be supplied by the dozen at an anna a bottle by Rashid, our nearest corner-shop, and would be drunk plain, for strong drinks of any sort were taboo.

The Anderson family who lived next-door to us in Rose Lane - seven brothers and their black-eyed beauty of a sister - would bring their musical instruments along. Together they formed a full if amateurish orchestra which supplemented the music provided by our hand-wound gramophone. The "eats" would be laid out in the dining-room, leaving the sitting-room and verandah free for dancing and party games. We had a number of these to choose from, most of them arousing lots of laughter or, more popularly, an exchange of delicate kisses as was only to be expected among a healthy lot of normal young people. Innocent flirting was a necessary part of the process of growing up, leading, at times, to happy and more permanent attachments, but there was never any intrusion of sex or drugs to spoil a wholesome evening's fun. The most popular game was Forfeits, as it always gave one an opportunity to get a message across to someone special.

Party games were not the only ones in which girls were welcome. Outdoors we had a kind of "You're It" that we called "I Spy", and another called "Sardines" which somehow involved getting near and even cuddling up to someone of the opposite sex. And as minds grew broader and times more relaxed, it became permissible for young girls to join us in games like "Monkey up the Tree" or "Sticks and Stones" which entailed revealing a degree of what was delicately referred to as their underwear. Yet it was still generally a time of great modesty, when the nearest that girls got to sportswear were bloomers for athletics, divided skirts for hockey, and full-piece bathing suits for swimming - and when it was indecent exposure if they showed their knees while cycling! Not that Bangalore's Anglo-Indian girls needed any artifice to attract its young males, for never did a town have so many truly pretty lasses. More than sixty years later, on my last visit there and long after such memories might be expected to have faded, old men of the place still

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recalled the good looks of our girls. I myself was very early smitten, and I cannot think of a time from about the age of seven when I was not in puppy-love - unconfessed and therefore unrequited - with some attractive little baggage, as every healthy little boy should be. This was to last until I was sixteen and a bit, when I met my true love, still continuing true.

Of one more childhood pastime I must tell. Plays and variety entertainments were quite popular at schools and clubs, and some of my friends - led, I confess, by me, - caught the mood and decided to organise our own shows in one another's houses. After the minimum of practice of songs, drills, recitations and plays (the latter usually plagiarised from some earlier school show, but greatly abridged and confidently ad libbed), and with never a prop for our improvised stage, we would invite our parents to attend our one-night show in return for a donation of four annas. It earned us a little pocket-money - and sometimes a bit of embarrassment, as when, halfway through an extended and somewhat vigorous exhibition of club-swinging, I heard the concerned voice of my mother call out from the back, "All right, Eric, now that's enough", which brought my act to a premature and red-faced conclusion!

While most of our friends and neighbours were Anglo-Indians, there were a few other Indians and Europeans as well. Among the latter was a Mr. De Beau who lived on Curley Street. He was English despite his name, an old sea-dog and widower who had chosen Bangalore for his retirement and the education of his only child, Norah. With her pink-white skin, blue eyes and blond hair, she was the very picture of an English schoolgirl. Motherless herself, she became one of the family and of special concern to my mother who treated her as her own daughter as she grew up. She married at about the time we broke up home in Rose Lane, after which we lost sight of her. But many years, Doreen discovered her in London, aging, sick and alone, and was able to help ease her last days. There were also the Nicachis on Prime Street, an elderly and distinguished-looking Greek couple whose grandson Paul was a good friend and fellow thespian at school (we once played daughters to my brother Cyril

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who was in a desperate hurry to marry us off!). Another couple were the Zeiglers, elderly German Jews who made a simple living by baking the most delicious homemade cakes and biscuits I can remember. But the two Englishmen whom I especially recall, not just because they were our friends but also because of the special circumstances of their marriages in India, were a Mr. Galiffe and a Colonel Falcon.

Mr. Galiffe was a retired British planter who lived with his wife and family in a large house at the end of Curley Street. His sons were the same age as Pat and Ralph, and went to St Joseph's with them, and it was through them that our families became friendly. He was a short, florid man whose hair was white and thinning even when we first met him. He seems to have come from a family of some status in England, for I remember seeing his family tree, a genuine lineage inscribed on silk cloth in an old-fashioned script, that went back to the twelfth century. It originated in Switzerland, under the name of Waiffre, which changed to Gaiffre as it passed through France, and finally to Galiffe when it crossed to England. One of his forebears had held a command under Wellington at Waterloo, and another had been Governor of a colony in the West Indies. He possessed leather-bound tomes in which these ancestors were mentioned along with portraits of some of them in imposing uniforms. Their family swords hung on his drawing-room wall, a most impressive sight to a little boy of four. His wife was a dark lady, clearly Anglo-Indian, for unlike many of his fellow planters, he had not taken an estate woman as his keep, but had gone to the Good Shepherd Convent which, among its other charitable activities then, ran a shelter for homeless Anglo-Indian girls. There he had chosen one to become his wife, a lady of homely appearance but of a cheerful and talkative nature. They lived happily in retirement, having raised three sons and a daughter, and were obviously well off. Our families continued to be friends even after we shifted from Curley Street, and I remember him, sprucely dressed and sporting a bow-tie, driving up in his carriage to Rose Lane every Sunday evening to share a glass of brandy and a cigar with my father. His widow remained our life-long friend, remembered, as mentioned

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before, for nearly being the death of me at my christening party, but more for her generous loan towards Cyril's IMA fees. I last saw her as our very special guest at my wedding in July 1945.

Another English friend, whose general bearing and fine military moustache proclaimed his Indian Army background, was Colonel Falcon. He was a tall, thin man with an upright carriage that made his Indian wife, who was tiny and bow-legged, appear even shorter as she reached up to put her arm through his on their evening walks. She hailed from the Punjab, though she lacked the generally good looks of women from that province, and the story was that she had been a servant girl in his household in the latter years of his service. His English wife had left him when she found the girl was carrying his child, sadly just after their own son had got into Sandhurst in the hope of following his father into the Indian Army. He himself resigned his command of his Baluchi battalion and retired to Bangalore where his Anglo-Indian children, Diana and Eric, started school among those of their own kind at Bishop Cottons. They were about my age, and seemed to talk well enough, but their parents felt that they needed an Anglo-Indian nanny to improve their English and help their mother with hers. Nan, who was then available, took the job, and so we two families became friends. Mrs. Falcon must have come from farming stock, for she soon bought land a few miles out of Bangalore, stayed in its village-type house during her many visits there, and made a success of growing dry crops like *cholam* (corn) and *ragi* and *bajra* (millets). She would attend the Bangalore *mundi* or wholesale market in person to see to the proper sale of her produce, and it was not long before she became quite a prosperous farmer.

She visited us regularly and soon improved both her English and her taste in western clothes. One day she surprised us by driving up in a sedan car, herself at the wheel and the driver by her side. Though still a learner, she persuaded my mother to let her take me out for a spin, so seated at the back with Diana and Eric, I set out on what turned out to be an eventful trip. For while driving on a bund that separated New Field and Sampangy Tank, with a fairly steep

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drop on either side, she suddenly lost control. She swerved left, corrected it in time to avoid plunging into the tank, swerved again to miss the drop into New Field, and ended up sharply against a tree that saved us from falling into the water. I cut my lips quite severely on the top of the back seat, and scraped my shins against a petrol can that stood on the floor. Diana and Eric were more shocked than bruised, and were still in tears when the driver managed to back the car, turn it about, and drive us safely home.

We lost sight of them after the family went to England in 1932, but more than fifty years later I was able to get in touch with the children through a prospective buyer of our house at Coonoor that Cyril and I had bought for our retirement. Eric had taken a temporary commission in the Indian army, and after a spell of war service had returned to the family farm with his widowed mother, looked after her until she died, and then settled down with a local village lass, Sinnamari (Little Mary), to turn his land into a thriving dairy-farm. Diana had remained in England, married an Englishman, emigrated to New Zealand after the war, and had two daughters, one of whom raises horses while the other spends her time sailing around the world with her husband.

When the Falcons no longer had need of Nan's services, she became housekeeper and aid to a Mrs. Bowling, a widow in her eighties who was confined to a wheel-chair. She had lost the use of both her legs, though not at the time permanently, after they had been severely damaged in the Kangra Valley earthquake of 1905, when she and her husband were trapped under their house that had collapsed on them. Dharmasala, their little hill-station and present home of the Dalai Lama, was flattened, and I remember her telling us how she had held on to a the hand of a rescuer and had refused to let go until he promised to dig out her husband first. Nan looked after her until her death in her cottage opposite us in Rose Lane, after which she came to stay with us for good. She was among those who came to Cyril's help, digging into her small savings to contribute towards his IMA fees, and never asking for its return. She also gave me the money to buy my first watch when I was doing my

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Intermediate. It cost all of twenty rupees from Ghani & Sons on Brigade Road, and served me till it was stolen from my room in Loyola College hostel. She died in 1953 at Bangalore's Gosha Hospital, a much loved and much missed "Nan" to us all.

In the summer of 1928 my mother got the chance of a free trip to north India. A friend from her childhood days, a Mrs. Walker, found she had a spare railway pass to Abu Road, a small station in Rajputana (now Rajasthan). It was important only as the railhead for Mt Abu, home of one of the Lawrence Schools to which Mrs. Walker's son, a boy of my age, was returning as a boarder. (The school closed after independence, but was taken over as the temporary premises of India's Central Police Training College, later the National Police Academy, where I spent seven happy years as Deputy Commandant from 1957. It was a godsend of a posting that enabled our two sons to complete their schooling at the excellent Christian Brothers school there.) Abu was also within easy reach of Delhi, where Doreen was doing her house-surgeoncy at Lady Hardinge Medical College, and of Lahore, where my mother had a brother and sister whom she had not seen for many years. The trip would enable her see them all at little or no cost, and give her a chance to visit north India for the first time.

But there was a small snag. Thinking that, at seven, I still needed a mother's attention, she felt that I should go along with her, but as my father had retired by then, we had difficulty finding the money for even the half-fare that it would cost. Not to be deterred, she decided that I would accompany her during my school summer holidays, and that, anticipating a practice that became a national pastime after independence, I would travel without a ticket! We were generally a law-abiding family, but I suppose that, like Kim, we thought it a silly formality to buy a ticket if we could get away without one, and the proposed deceit did not sit too heavily on our conscience. In the event, it was a memorable trip, not without its excitements and moments of peril. I can still experience the hazards of slipping inconspicuously past ticket-collectors at platform gates,



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and being hastily shoved into compartment toilets whenever a ticket inspector appeared about to make a check!

Our way took us via Bombay, where I tasted for the first time its famous *halwa*, a sweet made from fine flour and the milk of almonds, produced in pastel colours of pink, green, orange and yellow, slightly greasy to hold but with a delicate and delicious flavour. I also marveled at its large railway station, the huge baroque Victoria Terminus, now renamed Chhatrapathi Shivaji station after the local Hindu chieftain who turned his following of freebooters into a formidable force that opposed the then Muslim Mughul rulers of India in the seventeenth-century. We changed from broad to meter gauge trains at Ahmedabad, where a friendly Gujarati lady let me taste her delicate vegetarian food produced from a tiffin-carrier while we waited for the train to start, and arrived at Abu Road the next morning.

Despite the searing heat of the Rajputana plains, we failed to make the eighteen-mile trip by road up to Mt Abu to take the cooler air and visit the fabulous marble sculptures of the Jain temples at near-by Dilwara. To pass the time I used to visit the railway loco-shed, with its smell of oil and hiss of steam, to see the green and red steam-engines being prepared for their run. They had all been replaced by drab diesels by the time I returned to Abu thirty years later. I saw for the first time the game of bowls being played on the lawns of the railway institute, and visited the station at train times to buy the delicious Indian sweets sold on the platform. At night we slept on the open verandah of the railway quarters in which we stayed. Someone had told us that the Gir forests, then, as now, the only home of the Indian lion, were not far away, and I recall being more than a little frightened at sleeping in so exposed a situation. In fact, on my first night there I awoke and lay petrified for long, looking at a figure stretched out on the ground some distance from the head of my bed - until I realised it was the servant-woman, wrapped in her sari, sharing what relief the verandah had to offer from the heat.

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The weather was even worse in Lahore. The place we stayed in, one of a block of railway quarters, had neither fans nor punkahs, so like most other people in the Punjab during the summer, we carried our cots outside at night and slept on the lawn. But this gave us only slight relief, for the nets we were compelled to use against the myriad mosquitoes that pestered us kept out what little breeze there was. To get about by day we used a tonga. It was my first experience of this two-wheeled carriage in which the passengers sat on an upholstered cross-bench, their backs to the driver. The horses were bigger than the ponies used for our jutkas down south, and seemed much better cared for. Indeed, the people themselves looked bigger and better fed, which was only natural in a region where wheat and milk were the most important parts of their diet. Among the places we visited were the well-tended Mughul Gardens near Lahore's famous canal, the great railway workshops at Mughulpura that helped to maintain the network of rail communications so vital to the defence of our north-western frontier bordering Afghanistan, and the zoo where there was a near-mishap. We had started to move away from the tigers' enclosure when a mischievous tigress, objecting to the crowd, turned its back on us and squirted a stream of urine in our direction, fortunately missing us. More pleasant are the memories of eating kulfi, a delicious ice-cream made with crushed almonds or pistachios, and of drinking lemonade with pieces of ice actually floating in it, something quite novel to me, coming as I did from the cooler climes of Bangalore where ice was superfluous.

It was at Lahore that I saw for the last time my mother's youngest sister Tilly (short for Matilda), her two children Dorell and Eardley, and her second husband Jim Petherick, a burly British ex-soldier and railway security officer in whose quarters we stayed. I remember him for the practice he made of showing me his biceps at breakfast each morning in an effort to entice me to eat my wheat porridge. My mother's brother William, who had made his home with them for many years, returned to Madras after he retired and rejoined his estranged wife. As she happened to be the daughter of my father's sister Adeline, their marriage had complicated our family relationships somewhat, making my cousin my aunt and their son

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Malcolm my cousin twice over! He was their only child, and read economics with me at Loyola before taking a commission in the Indian army during the war. After retiring prematurely, he worked with a Christian relief agency in New Delhi where his wife was employed in the American embassy. They have no children, and with him the Cruickshanks line in India will die out.

At Delhi we visited Doreen in her hostel at Lady Hardinge Medical College where she showed us the books she had won in two of her subjects. She also took us to a college pond where they kept their supply of frogs for dissection, and actually whistled one up! Later, at the hostel dining-room, I brought disgrace on myself by refusing pudding after lunch with a “No, thank you, I’m not used to it”. (Our usual post-lunch dessert was fruit.) We toured the city by tonga, and took in New Delhi’s buildings, some completed, others still under construction. The layout and architecture of Vice-Regal Lodge, Parliament House, the Secretariat and India Gate, among others, foreshadowed the imperial grandeur that strikes the visitor even today. We did not visit the Kutb Minar, but I do remember the Red Fort in Old Delhi where, years later, Cyril was to be held a prisoner for a short time.

I do not know how we allowed my holidays to run out, but I returned to St Anthony’s so late for my second term that the delay, combined with my inveterate backwardness and lack of attention then, set me back so much that I failed to gain promotion at the end of the year. But after three months, at my mother’s persistent pleading, the nuns relented and let me go up to join my old classmates at St Joseph’s. They, of course, had made considerable progress in the higher class by then, while I had much leeway to make up. As a result, I lagged behind them for several years, remaining at the tail-end of the class.

This trip was the longest and most venturesome that I made in the 1920s, but there had been earlier ones closer to Bangalore that my mother and I took to visit my father in his districts. These were in the Telugu areas south and east of the Nizam’s Dominion of Hyderabad,

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as that potentate liked to call his territory. My first visits were in 1924, north to the Ceded Districts of Bellary and Anantapur which formed a single forest district. To get there we had to travel by meter-gauge from the City railway station, from where a few hours run took us into British territory that surrounded Mysore state. The train left at night, and I remember the lights in the compartment did not seem to have switches. Instead, they were fitted with cloth hoods which could be adjusted to keep it dark. This made it easier for me to see through the glass window and watch the countryside go by, always a fascinating sight to a little boy, especially if it were by moon-light. Besides the glass window, there were two other types that could be raised without cutting off the breeze. One was fitted with wire gauze to keep out insects and the other with slats to keep out the sun. The land on either side seemed to stretch endlessly, with only rocky scrub and hedge to interrupt it, while the rare light of an oil-lamp pointed to the existence of some isolated habitation, making it impossible to believe that most of India's teeming millions lived in villages. At the risk of exposing my eyes to coal-dust, I lowered the glass window and stuck my head out to smell the smoke and watch the sparks from the engine's funnel fly past. But I soon tired of this and went to sleep.

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Most of the stations we passed through were very small, their single platform lit by dim lanterns. Only passenger trains stopped at every one of them, and if an express or mail train roared through, the station-master would have to stand at the edge of his platform, one hand holding a raw flare to illuminate himself, and the other a large bamboo loop to which would be attached a metal token in a leather pouch. The engine-driver would hook his arm through the loop as he sped past, thus collecting his "line clear" without which he would not go on to the next station. Apart from the station-master there would usually be just one other general factotum - lamp-lighter, bell-ringer and porter (whom we called coolie), - part of whose duty as the train drew in at night was to sing out the name of the station so that no one bound for the place would fail to awake and descend. When the time came for the train to move off, he would sound the "ready" by using a dog-spike to strike a short piece of rail hanging from the platform roof. It made a very effective bell, and would be followed a minute later by the guard's whistle as he changed his light from red to green and held it high for the driver to see, whereupon the train would start to pull out.

I was very young then, but I can still remember some of my father's headquarters, of which the first that I visited was Bellary. His house was a two-storeyed bungalow of a size appropriate to the status of an imperial service officer, as indeed were most district quarters of the day. Though he had started at the lowest level of Forest Guard in the department and was thus barred by age from promotion into the Indian Forest Service, he did rise to gazetted rank in the provincial service, and as a DFO, was entitled to the bungalow that went with the post. (Every district headquarters had its standard set of officials usually known only by their initials: the DM or District Magistrate who combined the function of Collector, the DJ or District Judge, the DMO or District Medical Officer, the DSP or District Superintendent of Police (latterly known just as the SP), and, like my father, the DFO or District Forest Officer.) His bungalow was built on a hill within Bellary fort, with a commanding view of the endless, flat, black, cotton-soil around. I remember a distant railway line and a level-crossing for trains that went past at the edge

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of the town, and much further away, two or three massive granite hills, flat-topped and isolated, which seemed to change hue from grey to pink and mauve as they caught the varying sunlight. The large compound was full of thorny scrub and boulders, under the largest of which someone had fenced off a low chicken-run which I was cautioned not to enter for fear of snakes. Thirty years later, when I myself was posted as Police Superintendent of the district, this boulder helped me identify the house.

Another of his headquarters was Anantapur which we reached before dawn. There at the station awaiting us was a large bullock-cart, its bullock tied to a hitching-post and patiently munching hay. Its wooden platform was strewn with straw for our comfort and covered by a great hood of bamboo and thatch to give us shade had we arrived later in the day. All aboard, the stolid bullock set off slowly, the huge cart-wheels making a noise familiar to anyone who ever traveled an Indian country road: the irregular crunch of iron wheel-rims moving in their ruts and the jingle of metal pieces attached to the linchpins to the accompaniment of the clicking of the cartman's tongue to urge his beast on. Half an hour's trudge, and we arrived at my father's house.

The DFO's bungalow was the usual large, two-storeyed building with broad verandahs running much of the way around to provide the maximum of shade. The roll-up chiks, curtains made of split bamboo painted green and covered with rough jail-made cloth, and worked by ropes and pulleys, did much to keep the heat out when lowered. Even more effective were the curtains of aromatic *kus-kus* grass which, when watered, gave off a cool and refreshing smell. Yet my impression still is of brightly white-washed walls that seemed to catch and intensify the light. All the rooms were spacious and provided with wall-brackets or niches for the kerosene lamps which provided our only lighting at night. The larger rooms had punkahs, fine matting or linen flaps that hung from a plank suspended across the room from the roof and pulled to and fro by a rope that passed through a hole in one of the walls. Outside sat the punkah-puller, an underling paid by the government to keep the inmates cool, and

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though I personally never confirmed this, it used to be said that he could keep pulling the rope - allegedly attached to his big toe - even while he nodded off!

It took me a day or two to find my way about the rambling house with its many rooms, one of which was always kept ready for guests. One was a Catholic priest, an elderly Dutchman with a long white beard who carried his own box. This contained mostly ceremonial vessels and vestments, and I remember being told to keep very quiet while he said mass at a plain table in a room made ready for the occasion by my father, who incidentally acted as server. Another who might have been a guest was a young IFS probationer named Kuppuswamy who was doing his practical training under my father. In those days probationers usually stayed with the district officer under whom they trained, unless considerations of diet or caste made it inconvenient. Kuppuswamy was a Brahmin and so preferred to make his own arrangements, and the only hospitality my father could offer him on his visits was tea, biscuits and fruit. I remember being fascinated seeing him cut his mango into cubes and then chew and swallow each one, skin and all! It was very good for the health, he said, and he may well have been right. One very temporary “resident” was a village dog dying from rabies. It was locked in one of the outhouses which I was warned to keep well clear of until a vet arrived with his aids and removed it.

District compounds matched the houses in size, about two acres being the least in extent. Gardens were difficult to maintain for want of water in those hot and arid areas. What water we used in our kitchens and bathrooms had to be drawn by hand from a well in the compound and carried to the house in old kerosene tins slung from a bamboo yoke across the waterman’s shoulders. I used to wonder at his ability to climb the wooden staircase with its sometimes rickety steps leading up to the platform that ran along the back of the house, giving him and the sweeper access to the bathrooms upstairs. (Flush commodes were very rare even when I got into service many years later, and trenching was the standard means of disposal.) Even wild vegetation was sparse and consisted for the most part of thorn-bush

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and acacias. Yet there was no shortage of birds, of which I specially remember the blue jay for his gaudy plumage and raucous cry. There were also brown hoopoes with their cocky crests and long beaks picking away ceaselessly at insects on the ground; weaver-birds which we called bottle-birds for the shape of their nests; bee-catchers that, when not sitting in a row on some telegraph wire, would dart up and down as they flew, their wings tucked in with every dip; and even the odd king-fisher which could not have found many fish in that dry country. For pastimes, there would be a village pony hired for me to ride, always at the walk and led by a sais, or I would try my hand with a bow and arrow borrowed from a friendly Chenchu, a member of one of the forest tribes more commonly found in the neighbouring district of Kurnool. And when I wanted a ball, my father knew exactly which bush had the sort of root that could be shaped into one with very little paring.

He naturally took us on tour with him whenever he could. I was too young to march, so my camps were limited to those that could be reached by bus or train. I recall being overawed once when sitting in a bus behind a real bishop resplendent in his purple sash and piping, whose ring I was prompted to kiss. Our camp baggage would always include two specially designed kitchen boxes, one for crockery and cutlery, and the other for kitchen utensils, condiments and other camp stores. (When, years later, I came to do my own touring, my camp-cook, believing as so many subordinates do that his status flowed from that of his master, thought it unbecoming that I should travel without serviettes, fish-knives and finger-bowls!) Essentials like firewood, milk, eggs and the inevitable chicken trussed up and ready for the knife would have already been delivered at the outhouse or kitchen tent, all to be paid for when we broke camp. We halted in whatever place was available - forest rest-houses, tents or dak-bungalows - all usually sited in the most pleasant of locations. Furniture was naturally sparse, one of the most important items being the rest-house commode which was attended to by a man or woman of the scavenger caste to be found in every town or village.



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We last visited my father when he was at Vizagapatam (now Vishakapatnam, but just Vizag both then and now). It was about as far up the East Coast as one could get within the Presidency, only Ganjam district and the Agency Tracts separating it from the province of Orissa, to which they have since been joined. My father, who had nearly died of black-water fever when serving in Ganjam as a young man, was due to retire shortly, and we felt we should make the trip as much for sentiment's sake as to pay his sister Win a visit at nearby Vizianagaram (now Vijayanagaram). It was the fief a petty Raja, but not so petty that he could not, some years later, sponsor a visit to India of an English cricket team which included Hobbs and Sutcliffe, whom I had the luck to see batting at Bangalore. He also boasted a state band, of which Aunt Win's husband, Uncle Bajo (pronounced Bai-yo) was Bandmaster. He still had his Italian accent, and amused us when he called his wife Veenee and pronounced mangoes as mongoose. To get so far up the coast one had to cross two of the four great rivers of peninsular India, the Krishna and the Godavari. The train rumbled like thunder over the huge iron bridges that spanned them some distance from the sea before they split into their mighty deltas. Though these areas were the rice-granaries of the Telugu country, it was just after harvest time when we made the trip, and so instead of the emerald-green of newly-sown rice fields, I saw nothing but large tracts of yellow stubble interspersed by hay-stacks.

Our route to Vizag lay via Madras where my aunt Adeline Lazaro lived. (No one called her anything but Addie.) She was my father's younger sister, next to him in age and closest to him in sweetness of nature, piety and affection. She kept house for a tyrant of a husband (appropriately named Martin), and lived next door to the residence of the Catholic Bishop of Mylapore that fronted the sea. Her three grandsons, Ray and Eric Lazaro and Malcolm Cruickshanks lived with her. They were about my age and made good companions during our outings to the beach. Her house was a mile down the Marina from the office of the Inspector-General of Police, which I was to occupy nearly fifty years later.

## Growing up in Anglo-India

Vizag gave me my first sight of big sea-going ships, but of all those that used the harbour, none fascinated me more than the noisy dredger with its chain of buckets that never seemed to cease scooping up soil from the sea-bed. Our bungalow was close enough to the shore for our cook to intercept the fisherfolk carrying their large baskets of freshly-caught fish on their heads, from whom he would buy one or two to be served up later for lunch or dinner. (I still remember the fishy smell of the beach, brought to us on the sea-breeze.) This cook liked to practice his English even when spoken to in Telugu, and like Uncle Bajo, tended to pronounce his “Ws” like “Vs”. When my mother once told him the soup was cold, he gathered up our half-empty plates with the remark that sounded to us uncomfortably like, “I’ll go little vomit and come”!

One more memory lingers from those days with my father in the mofussil: our regular evening walks with him when the day’s work was done. In headquarters, we would stroll through the locality reserved for the bungalows of district officials, which included ours. They consisted of large compounds marked by wire fencing or cactus hedges, and were served by roughly-metalled roads which were not too deeply rutted, for not many heavy carts passed that way. There were few people to be seen, in contrast to the bazaar area which always seemed crowded, even in those days before we heard of population explosions. If we needed to go into “town” for essential shopping (clothes and all the better household stuff were always bought in Bangalore), we would take a jutka. The imperial service officers usually had cars, but this was something beyond my father’s means. At one stage in his younger days he did keep a horse, but this had caused my mother some alarm after it had thrown him when he was some distance out of headquarters and had returned home riderless. My father had turned up some time later, bruised and limping, helped by a peon who had been one of a party sent out to find him, and I am not sure the incident did not mark the end of his riding days. An embellishment for my benefit (I must have been about five at the time) had him and his horse come face to face with a tiger on a jungle track, whereupon the horse had shied, thrown him, and bolted home. My father lost no time climbing up a nearby tree,

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and the tiger had made as if to follow, causing him to climb still higher. He finally reached a branch that was either too tender or too rotten (the story varied) to take his weight, and like the baby in the lullaby, down had come father, branches and all. The crash had caused the tiger to emulate the horse and depart the scene with speed, leaving my father shaken but safe. It was a good story, worth hearing more than once. When in camp, we would take an evening walk along a field or on the single road that led past the rest-house where we were staying. Sometimes we would pass a lonely villager herding a cow or carrying a basket or a roll of matting on his head. If it was dusk, he would be singing or whistling as he went - to keep his spirits up, said my father, for unlike in headquarters, there would be no municipal street-lights served by a lamp-lighter who went his rounds with his ladder and taper, bringing the roadside lamps to life.

Of animals, apart from herds of blackbuck in Bellary, I saw surprisingly few. My father once pointed out a jackal slinking off down a country path, his coat hardly visible in the failing light of the evening. Their maniacal howling, usually in a pack, we heard more often, something so weird as never to be forgotten. (I was, in fact, no stranger to their call, for they were to be heard even on the outskirts of Richmond Town where I spent my boyhood. Their scavenging grounds there have long since been built over, and now that I think of it, I cannot remember hearing them even in the districts during my own more recent years. So recedes the wilderness before humankind.) The lonely evening countryside, especially at dusk, could bring on feelings of depression even in a little boy, and I remember how uplifted I once felt when, on a walk with my parents, we suddenly came upon a railway line behind an aloe hedge - a happy link, for me, with civilisation, friends and our home in Bangalore. The only hyena I ever heard, somewhere on a hill near one of our last camps out of Vizag, did have something of mad laughter about it. Naturally, it was my father who identified the call for me. And one final vivid memory: my first sight, as I descended a hill, of the setting sun, its whole outline quite visible through the evening haze. It was orange-red and clearly defined, yet seemed to

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shimmer in its own heat; just what I had been told it was - a big ball of fire.

Today, of all my memories of life with my father in the districts, I recall his camp-office best, the room in his bungalow set apart for attending to official business at home. Every district officer had one, as I did years later, where he could, in his own time, dispose of government *tapal*, the universal south Indian word for correspondence. (I later discovered the term had found its way via Bombay to far-away Sindh.) Here, too, he could receive an emergency caller when not attending his main office, which was usually located in the town. A single Camp Clerk saw to the receipt and dispatch of papers, helped to file any that were confidential and so not dealt with in the main office, and got the camp stuff ready when about to leave on tour. The peons would attend to more minor chores like ensuring that the kerosene lanterns were always ready for use, polishing the brass weights and scales (essential equipment, apparently, for every office), and keeping the place clean and tidy. One of their occupations was making envelopes from brown paper and gum made from blobs of the raw resin exuded by certain jungle trees, a pastime in which I helped with messy gusto. But what fascinated me most was my father's gun-box, its separate compartments lined with green baize and shaped to take the different parts of his 12-bore shot-gun - butt, stock and double-barrels, all wiped clean with a lightly oiled rag, - and his stock of cartridges, their cardboard shells of orange and red resting on their brass bases fitted with copper percussion-caps. These I was never allowed to touch if the gun happened to be out of its box and assembled. My father kept it more for self-protection and to destroy animals declared as vermin. He never shot for sport, for it was not in his nature, and he brought home no skins or trophies of any kind when he retired.